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D'Amelio et al.

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(54) **PROCESSES FOR PACKAGING PERISHABLE AND OTHER PRODUCTS**

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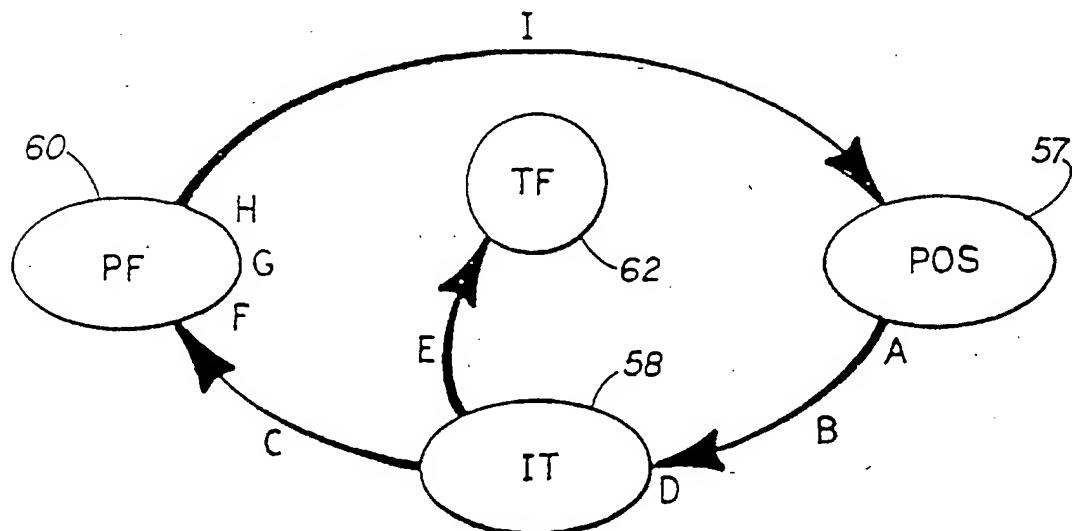
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Packaging and processes for facilitating fast, efficient, and reliable production line packaging of products, and more particularly perishable products including meat products. Product trays according to the present invention are formed of non-foam plastic material with three dimensional structure and configuration that imparts an esthetically pleasing appearance and feel to the customer at the point of sale, as well as offering to the consumer a container that is microwavable, dishwasher safe and freezer safe in addition, if desired, to being recyclable. Such packaging and processes are particularly useful in newly emerging automated supply chains where inventory sales are tracked to support centralized processing of meat and other perishable products at centralized facilities for shipment to geographically distant points of sale. In these situations, the packaging must present the requisite esthetic, convenience and performance qualities to the customer at the point of sale even after having been loaded into a shipment container, transported often by truck over hundreds of miles, unpacked and placed in the product display case. Non-foam containers according to the present invention can accomplish these results by featuring separation structure to permit manufacture, storage, stacking, shipment, and dispensing on processing lines with minimum chance or potential of the sort of locking together which can otherwise occur with non-foam containers.

29 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets



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